

Merry Christmas, 2013

To our dear family members and friends,

We hope you are all doing well. It has been an up-and-down year for us. With effort and luck, it got better at the end. Deanna's back is doing well; she went into the shop last year to have some lumbar work and it has paid off. Michael's PSA has been getting nicely lower each measurement; we think he's out of the woods.



Maurie and Jazz last year.

Auntie Janet and cousin Sam came up here to visit in January. We did a bunch of the iconic views and the ladies had a classic Wine-Country trip up to Cline. Their zin is Deanna's favorite. Maurie had sparkling apple juice, of course (but wait; see "birthday" below)



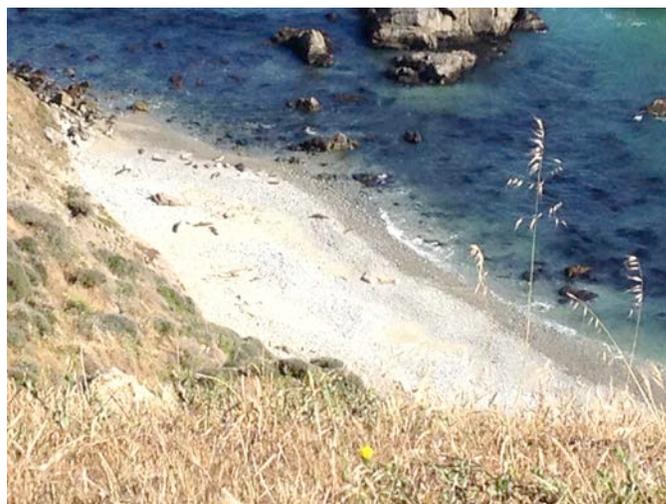
Janet and Sam's visit, the Golden Gate Bridge



Janet and Sam's visit, Cline winery

We suffered more than our share of family-member losses this year. Maurie lost her Dad, Tim Hamilton and Michael lost his segregate Mom, Elsa Roscoe. We will miss them and remember them in our prayers.

Before the weather turned warm, Deanna and Michael took Button, our vintage Airstream, out to Point Reyes National Seashore and visited our old friends the Elephant Seals. We added a little flat-screen that streams video from the iPad. Then before the weather turned hot, Cousin Bob helped put an air conditioner on the roof. We have a new Bluetooth amplifier that pipes the audio into the wall speakers. There is still work to do on the windows; we have some of them fitted with new rubber strips and buffed hardware, but more to go. We took the trailer out about four times this year. Our first trips included our elder dog, Jazz but we are sad to say that The Best Boy Dog In The Universe finally got too frail and we had to say goodbye to him.



Button adventures, Elephant Seals at Point Reyes.



Button adventures, flat-screen TV



Button adventures, air conditioner before.

Deanna was the high bidder at the Yosemite Conservancy meeting and won a night for two at the Ahwahnee Hotel. Michael slipped in a little more and reserved the Queen's Room where EIIR stayed when she visited. And yes, folks, the rumor is true: Elizabeth insisted on a bidet and it's still there.

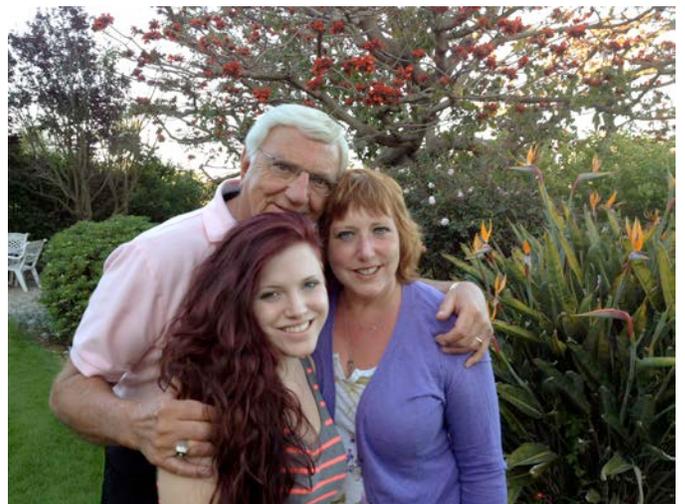


Button adventures, air conditioner after.



Yosemite in the Queen's Room at the Ahwahnee.

We towed Button down to Malibu for Spring Break with Maurie. Judy and Grandpa David flew from southern Arizona and joined us. This shot was from Linda's back yard in Palisades.



David and Judy came to Malibu for Spring Break.



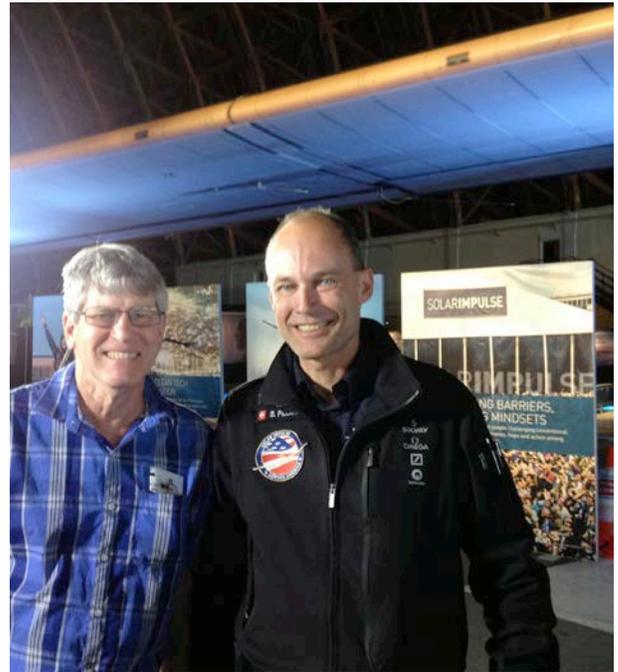
Deanna and Maurie in April.

Well, a family can't have too many 1962 sports cars so now, thanks to Elsa, we have a Porsche 356B. She bought it in 1962 and Michael has been driving it off and on for nearly 30 years. I only discovered this year that the little deck in the back is actually folded-down kid seats. No seatbelts, not even lap belts. So I folded them down again.



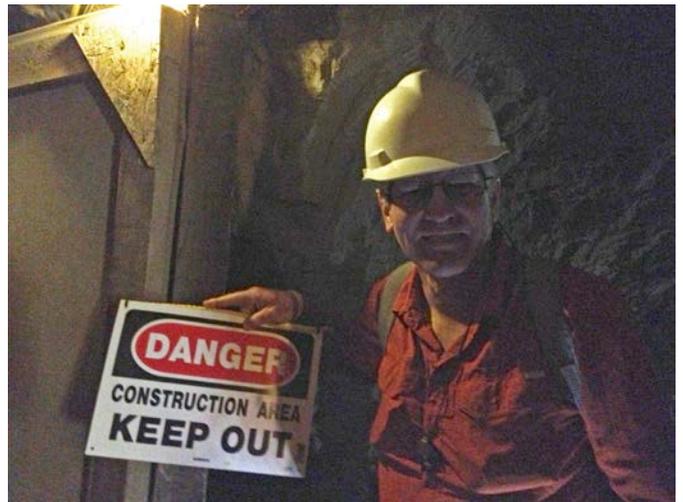
Elsa's Porsche; at our house now.

The Explorers Club had several interesting events this year. We went down to NASA Ames Research Center where Bertrand Piccard and his crew did a layover on their cross-country flight using the Sun for energy. The Solar Impulse climbs during the day while charging the batteries and uses altitude loss during the night to supplement the batteries. Gravity is also a battery. Bertrand's dad, BTW, went to the bottom of the Challenger Deep with Don Walsh in 1960.



Bertrand Piccard and the Solar Impulse.

A bunch of us went underground in the Black Diamond Mine east of here. Ray Sullivan led the group and we toured the geology of this coal and glass-sand workings following the famous Sulli Vein (true story).



Black Diamond Mine; who reads signs anyhow?

One evening I was sitting at my Mac when an email message came in from Explorers Club headquarters in New York. Their Annual Dinner was about to take place as it does every year (I attended with Elsa in about 1994). They wanted to be sure I was going to be there for a photo op of the reunion of those who carried Flag 161. Huh? Oh, that flag I took to the Klamath Mountains ten years ago when I mapped rare plants on serpentinite soils? Yeah, that flag. It turns out that when James Cameron dove to the bottom of the Challenger Deep a few months back, he carried the same flag. Don Walsh was on the surface to greet him on his

return. There were one or two other folks who carried that flag and it was to be a reunion. So Friday after work I grabbed my tux, caught a red-eye to Kennedy International, found a flop house in Queens, and went to the Waldorf-Astoria for dinner. I was back in my office Monday morning. I got to thank Senator Glenn for all his fine work, greet Scott Carpenter (sad to lose him later this year), and congratulate Chhiring Dorje Sherpa for his selfless devotion to a fellow climber on K2. This Fall, we hosted Dr. Zahi Hawass—noted Egyptologist—for a wonderful lecture on returning antiquities to his country.



Jim Cameron took my Flag 161 to the Challenger Deep.

The old homestead is still the best place in the World. The roses are working their way higher onto the house. We had three avocados (not trees, pieces of fruit).



Deanna's roses doing well.

Maurie and Michael conspired for Mothers Day. This extravaganza had to be picked up (after the mining trip) and refrigerated (in Button) all without Mama having a clue. Michael got up early under some false pretence and got the kitchen table all set up before Deanna got up for morning coffee.



Mother's Day gift from her girl.

Maurie turned 21 last June. She took Communion at church this morning and got to have that purple stuff instead of the clear stuff. We had quite a party with lots of friends and family members over. The older kids took off to a fun lounge so Maurie could enjoy being carded. Michael paid the round-trip cab fare in advance but everybody kept it nice and reasonable.



Maurie's 21st birthday party.

Remember that cottage in the back yard where we camped out for 10 months during our remodeling eight years ago—The Little House? Well, roof leaked back when Michael first met Deanna and he re-roofed it (part of the courtship ritual). Well those roof jobs are good for about 10 years and that was 11 years ago. So we had a really nice torched-down modified-bitumen, 25-year roof put down and added gutters and a drain line to the street.



New roof on the Little House.

Ah, and the fence behind the Little House had been beat up by the neighbor kids crashing their tricycle into it as they giggled; too the side, there was no longer a fence at all. So 60 feet of second-growth redwood later, it is quite nice. Polycarbonate roofing to cover the gap and we now have a long, skinny, tool shed. This part is two feet by 24 feet. It'll hold one row of garden tools.



New fence and tool-shed cover around the Little House.

Meet our new family member, Mattie. She's a rescue dog Deanna found online from a shelter in LA. Michael ran down to San Luis Obispo to meet the foster parents half way and it quickly became clear who was in charge now. She's an Australian Cattle Dog mix. Being a herd dog, she likes to have all of her peeps where she can see them at the same time. She sleeps besides Maurie's bed when she's home. She gets along great with kids, pretty nice with the cats, and does not like it that other dogs have the audacity to try to share her personal private planet. We're working on that one.



Mattie takes the wheel.

What has become an annual mountaineering tradition continued this year. Cousin Jon and Michael went over Bishop Pass and climbed to about 13,000 on Mt. Agassiz feet before it became too technical for our blood.



Mike and Jon on Bishop Pass

We set up a base camp at Saddlerock Lake and kept it for a couple days. The beauty of that is that we could get closer to the base of the peak, get up before dawn, leave the camp intact, travel light, and get back before dark and just crawl in. We struck camp, hiked out, and had beers and fresh food in Bishop before a rendezvous with cousin Wayne (Jon's dad) up Rock Creek where he and his Carleton friends packed into Humphries

Basin. Jon and I went on to Lee Vining, were glad the smoke from the Rim Fire was blowing north the next day, and went up Mt. Dana. Jon went on to the summit (13,061') and Michael went to the top of Ferdinand Point, a promontory on the flank of Dana unofficially named after his old friend, Ranger Ferdinand Costillo. Jon and I will combine our photos soon but here's a draft: <http://www.diggles.com/agassiz/>



Just above 13,000 feet on Mt. Agassiz.

Maurie's bunny has both a habitat down at Cal State Northridge and one up here in Oakland. The whole gang was here for the summer. We got Mattie just a week before Chubs and Maurie went back to finish school so there will be more adjustment in their respective futures.



Maurie and Chubs hard at work at college.

Deanna and Michael celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary this year. There are many nice things a young couple can do to commemorate such an occasion. A selfie at the beach, watching the migration of the California Gray Whales over wine at sunset, and some sort of mineralogy thing that seems to be traditional.



Tenth anniversary.



Dinner at the Cliff House; whales spouting outside.

The new Bay Bridge is open! They failed to get the steel ribs right but even with this drawback it is lot safer than that old one. That either says a lot about how minor the current problem is or how bad the past problem was (I trend more towards the latter). It is, however, beautiful. Judy and Grandpa David joined us from Arizona yet again this year (yah!) for Thanksgiving and we showed them a good time.



Showing David and Judy the new Bay Bridge.

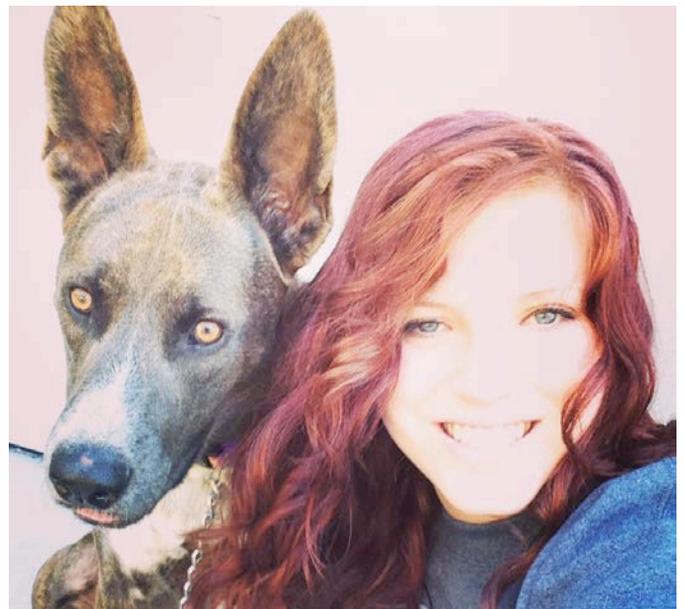


Deanna holding court in her kitchen at Thanksgiving.

We have quite the feast and Deanna takes this dinner seriously. She works up a menu, brines two (count 'em: *two!*) turkeys, and the gang comes to visit. All three of us have new jobs. Maurie works in a gym for little kids and they love each other. Deanna's outfit got bought out so she bailed and went to a place that is more nicely run, and Michael, who lost his GS-13 during cutbacks 15 years ago, got selected to a senior staff position as a GS-14 in the Office of Science Quality and Integrity where he reads a lot of journal articles. As we end the year, we are thankful for all of you, for our health, and for wellbeing.



Family and friends for turkey dinner.



Mattie and her girl, Maurie.



Angel on Top

Have a grand and safe Christmas and New Year,
-Michael, Deanna, and Maurie
-Lilly, Luv Dove, Yo Yo, Lola, and Mattie